

# Among Men who Work with Hand or Brain

## Seek for Opportunities and 'Bad Luck' Will Flee.

SOME one once said: "The successful man says he has made himself go, and the unsuccessful man says he has been made so."

He was right. The people with whom I am acquainted who have done well in life are exceedingly energetic in striving to impress on me the fact that they have done it "all out of their own heads." Those who have failed are equally earnest in trying to persuade me that their failure has been all a matter of "sheer bad luck."

I always take both of these statements with a huge grain of salt. The men and women who have succeeded have, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, largely deserved to succeed. Fortune, however, has helped them. Those who have failed have, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, contributed to their own failure. They are not quite so free from responsibility as they are inclined to argue. There are few people to whom opportunities do not come at some time or another. But some have a peculiar facility of making the best of them, and some others do not recognize them or are unable to utilize them.

### "Luck" Often a Deciding Element.

There is a considerable element of fortune in life. One of the most successful lawyers, a man whose income runs into five figures a year, came into prominence through the accidental absence of some other counsel engaged to argue a case, in which he was retained as a kind of ornamental person, thrown in to add consequences to the appearance of his leaders. But the leaders were away at the critical moment, and the young lawyer had to supply their place. He did so so satisfactorily that in a few years he was eclipsing those leaders.

Upon the other hand, a friend of mine, whose particular hobby it is to assert that a man "carves his own fortune," and who has, of course, been remarkably successful, while going to conclude a piece of business from which he would have reaped some thousands of dollars' profit, was knocked down by a cab, arrived late in consequence, and then only to find that the business had been concluded with a rival firm.

He admits now that, after all, a man may be fortunate without blame attaching to him. That cab converted him to a considerably more sympathetic view of persons who do not happen to succeed in everything they take in hand.

### Life Like a Game of Chance?

A young friend of mine, who has held a post in an old established firm for years, during which time he made excellent progress, suddenly found all his immediate hopes dashed by the failure of the firm. It is obvious that no blame could attach to my friend for that.

On the other hand, I know a person who bought a small business five years ago. He calculated it should bring him in something like \$2,000 a year. It is bringing him in \$7,000, thanks to a notability "discovering" the place, and giving it such an advertisement that it has been thronged since. The one man's misfortune and the other's good fortune appear to me equally matters of what people call "luck."

There are misfortunes which no one can foresee or provide against. Opportunities, again, occur to people in a peculiarly fortuitous fashion. But life is not a game of chance, after all.

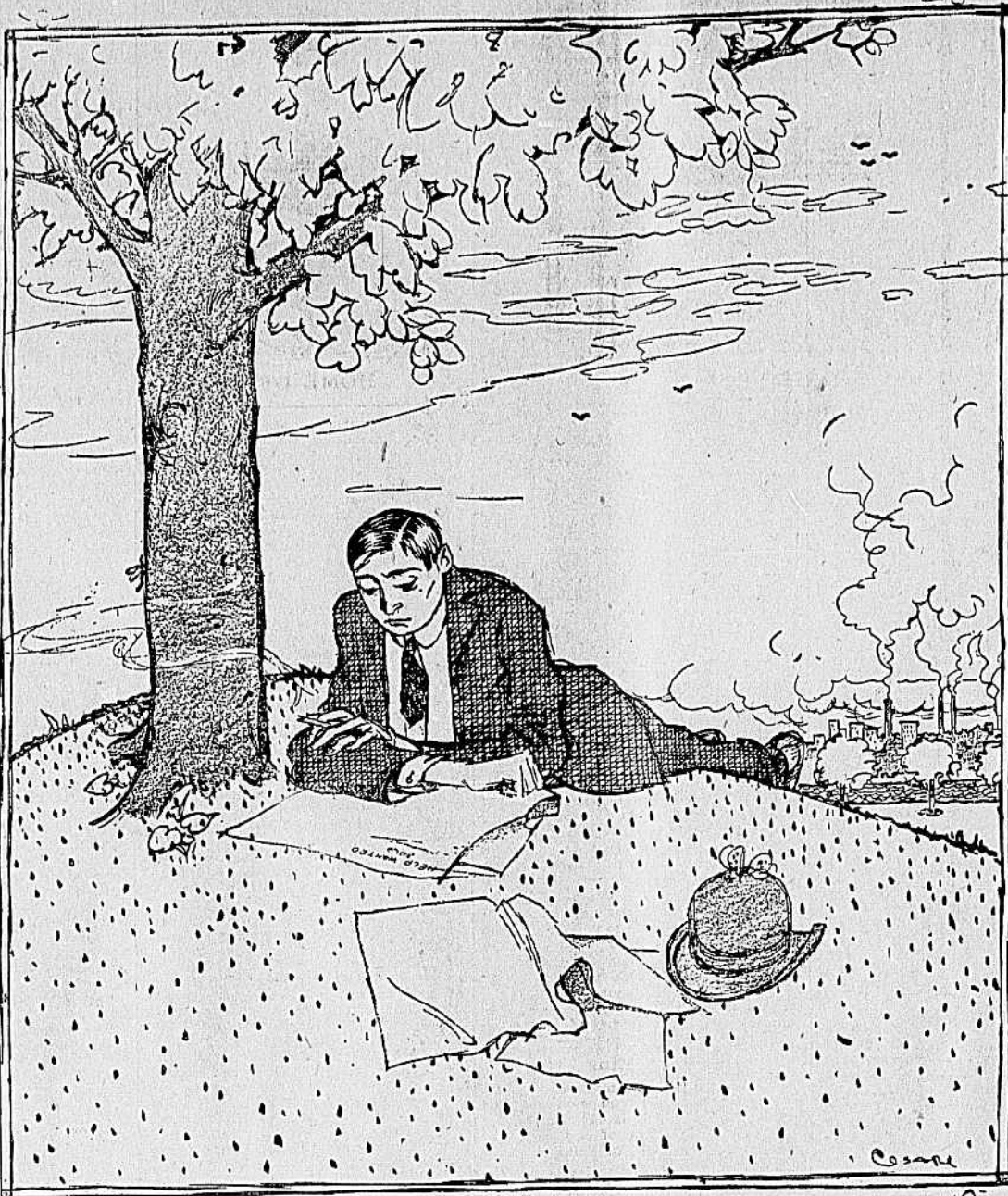
There are, then, circumstances in life which are entirely beyond our control. There are others which we can ourselves govern; and these are the ones which are worth our thought—the opportunities that come within our grasp.

### Opportunity May Be Sought.

A good deal can be done in finding opportunity and improving it. "I had two friends," said Barnum. "One of them invented a soap. It was a magnificent soap. What did he do with it? Just washed himself with it, sir—just washed himself with it, and died a poor man. The other had a soap not fit to walk in the same section. What did he do with it, sir? Advertised, and lived in gold."

I do not say that opportunities always come by advertising; I say that they come much more plentifully to those who seek them than to those who do not. Seeking opportunities to do better ought to be as recognized a part of a person's work as the performance of his work itself.

"Sitting under a cherry tree with one's



By Prof. E. G. Minnich.

mouth open won't catch much," said Moody.

"Get up the tree, friend, and give the branch a shake."

### Many Prefer Groaning to Looking.

It is wonderful how many, though, prefer the sitting down rôle, and grumble that the fates are unkind to them when they go empty away. Among my acquaintances are men and women who, at the end of four or five years' employment, are in just the same situation they were in at the beginning. They complain to me sometimes that they never get a chance. When I suggest that they might try and make one, they are offended. These people are hard workers, too. They are not idle. But they have not developed the faculty of looking forward and planning to do better. Few people ever cultivate it. Those who do find it pays.

"I am one of the most unfortunate fellows in the world," a friend groaned to me a few days since.

It was his normal condition, and I did not betray peculiar curiosity to discover the latest cause. He will have another in a month or so. He waited a moment or two, and went on:

"You remember that business concern that was going to start, and that I spoke to you

about, do you not?" I nodded. "Well, Johnson's got the post as advertisement manager. I might have had it for the asking."

"Why did not you ask?" I inquired.

"Never thought of it till the other fellow got it," he replied. "I tell you I am the most unlucky chap that ever lived!"

The real difference between Johnson and my friend is not that Johnson is the luckier, but that he looked about him, and my friend did not.

### Others' Success Discourages Some.

The success of another person in something where one might have succeeded oneself is to most people a peculiarly disheartening event. I ought not to be, but it is. Beer-bohm Tree, the actor, tells the story of two actors who received the intelligence one day that a friend of theirs had just received an engagement at a remarkably enviable salary. One of the actors made up his mind to put forth all his energies to follow his example. The other came to the conclusion that he was an unfortunate, and it was not "worth while trying" at all. The success of others is just the reason why we should be encouraged to hope for success ourselves—if we are worthy of it; and when we hear of their hav-

ing opportunities, we should be assured that there are like ones for others.

Study the successful man and his methods, and do not be too conceited to learn from him. He is a thing to be thankful for as our object lesson, if you only have the wisdom to learn. "Most people are so irritated by the success they might gain knowledge from that, instead of studying it, they turn their eyes away from it."

"Never permit yourself to believe that you are an unfortunate person," declared Rothschild. "If you do, you will probably really become such." The people who most loudly declare that they never have opportunities are frequently just those who, when they do come, are so unfortunates to avail themselves of them that they can do nothing with them. Keep "fit" for what may happen and the occasion that may arise.

"I have been blessed with much good fortune," said Sir Henry Irving. "But I have worked hard, and I have endeavored always to do my best, and tried not to lean on fortune's arm with more weight than I could help. I think there is generally enough good fortune for every one, if he or she has eyes to see it, and a will to seize upon it."

"Courage, perseverance, patience, are the great fortune finders," said Emerson. "If a man has these qualities, he will find himself too liberally endowed to be overlooked by her."

## Ignorance of Business Salesperson's Great Fault

By C. L. Martin.

It has been said that the greatest fault of the clerk is lack of consideration. From the viewpoint of the customer this may be a just criticism, though years of experience as a professional shopper have

not shown that clerks are so different from other human beings in matters of politeness, consideration, attention, and kindred traits. Gather a thousand people of any class together and you will find about nine hundred who have little consideration for other people under any circumstances. Placing the thousand people behind the counter of a great department store cannot change these figures. Often it is the fault of the customer if he receives rude treatment at the hands of a clerk, for even customers are trying sometimes.

There is another side to this question of the deficiencies of clerks which is important from the employer's standpoint at least, and one which even he fails to realize in many cases.

The average clerk knows little about the goods he sells over the counter. It is this lack of knowledge of the goods he handles and the stock carried in the department which most frequently allows trade to slip through his fingers.

The sale of a bit of merchandise seems on its face a simple thing. It is summed up in a request from the customer, the filling out of a check, by the clerk, wrapping and the delivery of the parcel. Instead, however, of this being a complete transaction in itself it is really the consummation of a transaction which has been pending for months and for which much time and many dollars have been spent.

### Buying of Stock Counts.

There are days of large business and keen competition. The first thing which has to be considered is the buying of the stock of merchandise, and this means heavy expense, not only on account of the money invested but because competent buyers are scarce and demand good salaries. The goods must be well bought.

There is an old saying that "goods well bought are half sold." Twenty-five years ago this was true beyond a doubt. Today every merchant exploits his goods by advertising. In addition to being well bought, they must be well advertised. No matter how well advertised they may be, they must be displayed in a manner suited to the advertisement. Each one of these branches requires competent, high-salaried men to direct and carry out the work.

We will assume that each has done his work thoroughly up to this point—the merchandise has been carefully chosen, bought at a figure to insure good profit to the merchant and reasonable price to the customer; it has been advertised in a strong, interesting holding style, and displayed in a manner to support the advertisement. At this critical point the clerk steps in and meets the customer to finish the transaction. If he is competent, he knows his business, and, above all, knows his stock, everything will work out as planned, but let an incompetent clerk come in at this moment and he can destroy every possibility of a sale that has been worked up by weeks of preparation. In five minutes he can do more harm to his employer's interests than can be remedied in as many years. And, according to one of the largest employers in this city, it is more often ignorance of the goods he handles than any other one thing that spoils the trade at this point.

### Clerks Don't Know Stock.

First of all he does not know his stock thoroughly. There is usually one person in

a department who knows the stock, and the rest have to ask him if he is there, and, if not, let it go. If a customer asks for something not in plain sight she is told that "we never have much call for that and so we don't keep it." The customer goes where they do keep it.

Less than a week ago I went into a department store to get a certain kind of a cereal cooker, which has given satisfaction in our household for several years. Three clerks told me that they had nothing in stock by the name I mentioned and nothing even answering the description I gave. The head of the department was called; and he said they had nothing by that name, and did not know where it could be obtained.

On a chair was a girl dusting the tinware on a high shelf. She had caught snatches of our conversation and got down to hear more. "Turning to the young woman who was waiting upon me she said, 'Isn't that what she wants over there on that shelf under the counter?' It was exactly what I wanted, and she was the only one who even knew they had it, although the name was stamped plainly on the top. I lost half an hour's time, no end of patience, and almost left the store in disgust—the girl who knew the stock saved the customer.

Incidents of this character could be given without number, but every one has had similar experiences and can draw from his own memory.

### Clerks Should Study.

The clerk who wants to succeed—who wants to make himself conspicuously indispensable to his department—and who is ambitious to become a buyer—should train himself to know by sight and touch each grade of goods he handles. He should look everywhere for information in regard to his line, not only in the advertising columns of his and other firms, but also in whatever printed matter comes to hand. Almost every manufacturer does more or less advertising nowadays, giving much information as to methods in manufacture, reasons why his product is superior, and suggestions for its use. As to the superiority of the article it is well to form an opinion independent of all statements made therein, but as to information along other lines much can be gained in this way. It makes no difference where the information is obtained if it be accurate.

It is a point worthy of note that while only high class men are employed to take all preliminary steps leading up to the sale of merchandise, when it comes to the actual transaction over the counter it is most often turned over to those who are not even fairly well informed in regard to the goods they have in hand.

Employers are helpless to a great extent in this regard. Some try to hold to certain standards, but most of them are obliged to take such help as is offered.

### Schools for Salesmen.

There are schools of every kind in the country today. Why not a school for clerks? A correspondence school, for example, could give a general course of instruction adapted to all lines of salesmanship and follow it up with specialized courses in linens, china, silks, pictures, hardware, or other lines carried in a big store. The general course would be the same for all and when completed it could be followed with as many specialties as the ambition of the clerk might suggest.

Surely a course of study of this character would be endorsed by employers. It would raise the standard of clerks, and post-graduates would be entitled to better salaries than they could otherwise command.

## No Room in Business for Ostentatious Man.

By M. M. Atwater.

ONCE I led me, a short time since, to a physician's office. As I was ushered into the inner room amazement seized me, for there before me

in place of the quiet, dignified man of medicine, stood the veritable likeness of a bumpy stealer of the most virulent type. There was the violent dressing, the big yellow diamond in the shirt front, the showiness of manner, and all that proclaims the cheap swell, who fashions his habit with a mistaken idea of gaining the public esteem. Just behind this dazzling image stood a large cabinet, containing my surgical instruments of glittering steel, enough implements of this trade to cut and cure hundreds; and yet the ante-room held but one lone waiting patient.

The man was plainly outshone by his tools; and the cheap glitter had a tang of hypocrisy about it which was shown again when the telephone rang. The surgeon rushed to the receiver and in a pompous manner swelled forth:

"Ah, a case of life and death!"

Then he haunted down the stairs, a very Popinjay of an Esculapius.

### In the Glamour of the Spot Light.

There was a certain air of instability, a glamour of the spot light, and a certain charlatan about it all that impressed me with the fact that it was looking at Ostentation personified in the great city of Chicago.

Such a bid for popular favor will never succeed. When one has need of a surgeon one demands the aid of a hard-headed man of science.

The world has an astute eye and can keenly mark the difference between the real and the make believe.

A business man should have no use for that which savors of the sham and the artificial. Thus does one of America's successful men speak of his start in business: "In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman I took care not only to be in reality industrious and frugal but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I dressed plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion; a book, indeed, sometimes daunted me from my work, but that was seldom and gave no scandal. In order to show that I was not above my business I sometimes brought home my purchases through the streets on a wheelbarrow. Thus being esteemed as an industrious, thrifty young man, and paying promptly for what I bought, the merchants solicited my custom, and I went on swimmingly."

### Magnificence Belongs to Rich.

A man must heed public opinion in the

general conduct and bearing of his private life if he wishes to avoid unfavorable comment, which will in the end be to his disadvantage. "Magnificence," it is said, "is the decency of the rich."

An officer, holding a high executive position in a great corporation, was once visited by a director of the concern, and this was the sharp question suddenly put to him:

"What are you willing to pay to keep your place?"

"Why, I don't understand," was the reply. "I like my work and I would rather pay any money than lose my job."

"It's not a question of money," rejoined the other. "But there's a price you must pay if you hold your place. You have got to give up this ostentatious way of living you have, this reckless automobile driving in the face of local ordinances. You must observe the appearances of propriety and act like a sober-minded, decent, respectable citizen. The public has an interest in you as an officer of it. You must reflect credit on the concern and cut out your ostentatious display or get out. Pay this price and we'll keep you."

### Desire for Splendor is Primeval.

The desire that seems to be inherent in the human breast of appearing splendid, magnificent, and sumptuous is doubtless the primeval longing of the savage man for the ostentatious feathers and beads.

The professional man who wishes to advance himself, the tradesman who wants steady patronage, the salesman or other employee who wishes to climb higher, must know what is fit for his position and have the stamina to curb any propensity to prodigality or magnificence beyond his means.

Madam Grundy is a fickle dame, and he who heads her voice will oft find himself in sad straits.

An acquaintance of mine, a woman of some wit, thus humorously expressed this sentiment in telling of the purchase of a new home of double or triple the value of the old one.

"We're nicely settled and I want you to come and see us; but our house is not furnished yet."

"Not furnished?" I echoed, knowing that the old home had been well filled with good furniture and choice pictures and decorations.

"Well, no. You see, the trouble is our things don't at all come up to the fine house. Now, we positively will have to refurnish or have people say we can't afford it, and we're in duty bound to prove we can afford it, even if we have to go into debt."

## Inventor Tells How He Made His Success.

By D. C. Carney.

IT is no easy task to tell the story of an inventor, as I have been requested to do. An inventor's story is really never fully told until he dies. His first invention merely opens up a vista wherein lie vast possibilities in the future, and there is no time in his life, once he is seized with the inventive fever, when he can candidly believe that his work is done. Edison is a magnificent illustration of this, as well as scores of others who are not so well known. Besides this, the dissipation of inventors put them in a class separate from the ordinary mortals of life. I hope that what I say will not sound egotistical or self-conceited. I am really trying sincerely to look at the whole question outside of my own individuality; but every one who has come in contact with inventors knows that they have constitutional peculiarities. They are odd, whimsical, queer, quaint, curious, fanciful, unusual, or anything else that you care to call them.

### Born with Inventive Genius.

I must have been born for an inventor. My parents say so. Possibly it is because they were always prone to overrate what they called my singular personality. I know my uncle, who is much prejudiced in my favor, said that I displayed distinctive inventive qualities at the tender age of 6. Others say that I had a temperamental all my own. Now, it is just possible that all of these nice phrases may be used to cover up the fact that I was a policky baby and had to be walked at unusual hours of the day and night. In any event, I well recall that as a boy I took great delight in constructing imaginary devices that differed from the mud edifices constructed by my playmates.

### Some Make Fortunes.

After I had finished my schooling, I attended a lecture given by an eloquent orator. I think it was a Dr. Conwell of Philadelphia—who spoke on the great possibilities that lay before the young man of America. Among other things he pointed out the great field that lay open to inventors, and inci-

dentally instanced the enormous fortunes that had been made by the patentees of small and unconsidered articles. He said, among other things, that the stationer who invented the rubber tip for lead pencils made a fortune of \$100,000; the genius who devised the roller skate, which affords so much amusement to the youth of the land, came out of that with a cool million dollars; the inventor of the gimlet screw collected in royalties \$2,700,000 before he finally gave up his invention; the thoughtful person who devised copper toes for boys' shoes made \$200,000; while the inventor of the needle threader is credited with having collected \$10,000 a year for many years; the return ball toy brought its owner \$50,000 a year; while the dancing Jim Crow netted the inventor \$75,000 a year for several years. Pharaoh's serpents, a mere chemical combination, was worth \$50,000, while the glass ball which hangs over gas jets netted the man who thought it out \$81,000. Putting every paper on cloth was worth \$50,000, while it is claimed that the patentee of metal plate soles and heels for shoes, in eight years, received a total of over \$1,000,000. There were many more figures of the same kind, but they were too numerous to introduce in an article of this kind.

### Technical Training Helps.

By this time I had the fever badly. I went to a technical school and learned the principles of mechanics, and after that went to work in a machine shop. For I had well conceived ideas regarding the direction to be taken in the world of invention. Years went on, and no important results came about. I got married and had a small family, all the while making a decent living as a first class mechanic. I had a little shop in the rear of my house, and here I worked every night in the week in an effort to perfect a certain manufacturing device. I cannot name it here, for it is now an article widely manufactured and sold in all parts of the United States. The thing carried me away to such an extent that I obtained three

months' leave of absence from my employment, and during that time I worked day and night in the little shop. I was there for days at a time without seeing the members of my family.

### Discoveries by Chance.

In the meantime I continued plugging away at my invention. It was all completed but one little link, which seemed to elude me with almost devilish persistence. Time and again I failed, but still I stuck to my work. There were periods when I was tempted to cry with rage and disappointment. I became a nervous wreck, but still I continued at my self-appointed task. Finally, one day while walking along the street I noticed a peculiar movement in the wheel of a big wagon, and like a flash the thought that I had been groping for so many weeks and months came to me as an inspiration. I hurried back to the shop, and before the clock had struck the hour of midnight I was able to shout "Eureka!" I patented the device, and I am now at the head of a manufacturing concern which is placing it on the market in large quantities.

### Determination Wins.

It seems to me that there is food for thought in this experience of mine. The man who determines to do a thing, whether it be a patent or something else, usually succeeds, but his determination must be real and not artificial or assumed. The world is full with examples of men who accomplish things in spite of poverty and other obstacles. Think of Edison, the newsboy; of Eli Whitney, the poor school teacher; of George Stephenson, a neglected miner's boy, and you will be convinced that pluck and courage are bound to win. The United States today is filled with boys, many of whom are poor as can be, and yet have the brains and ingenuity to turn out inventions which will surpass those already known to mankind and realize fortunes which will seem fabu-

lous even in this day of millionaires and billionaires.

But the man who hopes to win must never give way to discouragement. A friend of mine once invented eye glasses which were so shoddy on the edge of the lens that the wearer could see what was going on behind him. He thought it would fill a long felt want, and after a great deal of painstaking work he perfected a pair and sent them to the patent office at Washington. After waiting many weary months, word came back to him that he was too late. That seventeen other persons had already patented something that was either similar or much like his own. So it must not be assumed that you are the only one with ideas.

Inventors Absent Minded. I have already spoken of the eccentricities of inventors; but this friend of mine reminds me of something still more prevalent among them, and that is their absent mindedness. Once when my friend was working on a certain thing, which afterwards turned out to be successful, he was scarcely on speaking terms with his wife and children. One day his wife called him down to dinner and he dropped his tools mechanically and went to the dining room in a sort of a trance. He sat there for ten or fifteen minutes, not saying a word to any one or doing anything. At the end of that time he picked up his napkin with great deliberation, and wiping his mouth, walked away from the table without having eaten a morsel of food. He went back to his work in the full belief that he had had a full meal.

I am fortunate in having a number of friends who are either inventors or interested in inventions. We have gotten together a little organization which we playfully call the inventors' club. We meet at one another's houses, and it is surprising to find out how much better nine heads are than one. Things as mysterious as night become as bright and clear as day. It has always been so. It was the case when Columbus made the egg stand on its head, and it will continue to be so until the end of recorded time.